



# **PSC NEWS**

## **Missouri Public Service Commission**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **PSC Staff Files Natural Gas Complaint Against AmerenUE**

JEFFERSON CITY---The Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission has filed a complaint against AmerenUE alleging Commission rules were violated in connection with a natural gas incident in Boonville on October 10, 2005.

The PSC Staff has asked the Commission for authority to go to circuit court to seek penalties against AmerenUE. If authorization is granted by the Commission, the circuit court will ultimately determine if there should be a penalty assessed and the amount. The penalty would be paid, by law, to the State School Fund.

Staff's report states the October 10<sup>th</sup> Boonville incident occurred when high-pressure gas was unintentionally allowed into a low-pressure main. According to the report, a natural gas valve was opened to allow high-pressure natural gas to enter the main and service lines in the 1200 block of 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The incident occurred when a low-pressure main on Roberts Street was still connected to the main on 6<sup>th</sup> Street. The report states this resulted in an unintended flow of natural gas from the high-pressure system into the low-pressure system, causing over-pressurization to occur.

Over-pressurization, the report states, caused low-pressure equipment at numerous locations to operate in an unsafe manner, including instances of higher than normal flames and natural gas leaking from equipment components.

Seven residences and the local fire station received varying levels of fire and smoke damage, and a number of other customers received over-pressure damage to natural gas equipment. Approximately 1,200 natural gas customers temporarily lost service due to the incident.

In its report, the PSC Staff determined that the probable cause of the incident was "the over-pressurization of the Boonville low-pressure system due to an operator error during a system conversion from low-pressure to high-pressure. AmerenUE did not have adequate procedures in place to ensure that all main connections from the system being converted were separated from the low-pressure system".

In addition to its complaint, the PSC Staff report contains a recommendation that AmerenUE finalize a new procedure for converting a distribution section from low-pressure to high-pressure. AmerenUE has already initiated actions to develop such a procedure. Staff has recommended the procedure be submitted to the PSC Staff for review before AmerenUE converts any more low-pressure systems in Missouri. The PSC Staff has also recommended that AmerenUE submit work plans prior to any other conversion and to notify the PSC Staff prior to each system conversion so that the Staff has an opportunity to observe the work.